CLAIMS

1. A computer program product for automatically gathering data from remote and local computer-based data sources and using gathered data to update an information appliance comprising computer program code recorded on a data carrier, said computer program code comprising:

code for loading a set of rules to permit said program to define a set of links between said information appliance and said remote or local source;

instantiating code for instantiating said set of rules to gather data from said remote or local data source;

communication code for permitting said information appliance to communicate with said local or remote data source, and

updating code for updating data stored in said information appliance based on data gathered from said remote or local data source.

2. A computer program product as claimed in claim 1 wherein said code for permitting said information appliance to communicate with said local or remote data carrier is provided by network code for providing a distributed communications mechanism for use with remote data sources.

3.   A computer program product as claimed in claim 2 wherein said network includes a code section which is located at said remote data source.

4.   A computer program product as claimed in claim 1 wherein said communicating code is provided by code for querying local data sources and listening code for detecting when data values change.

5.   A computer program product as claimed in claim 1 wherein said updating code includes code means for updating collection and individual data values automatically without input from a user.

6.   A computer program product as claimed in claim 1 wherein said updating code is provided by user interface code for providing a summary of gathered data to said user and user responsive code means for accepting or rejecting said data.

7.   A computer program product as claimed in claim 1 including transform code for transforming data between a first format to a second format as required by a local or remote data source connected to said information appliance.

8.   A computer program for automatically gathering data from remote and local data sources and using the gathered data to update an information appliance, said computer

program comprising:

code for generating a set of rules to permit said program to define a set of links between said information appliance and said remote or local source;

instantiating code for instantiating said set of rules to gather data from said remote or local data source;

communication code for permitting said information appliance to communicate with said local or remote data source, and

updating code for updating data stored in said information appliance based on data gathered from said remote or local data source.

9. A system for automatically gathering data from remote and local computer-based data sources and using gathered data to update an information appliance coupled to said system, said system comprising:

at least one information appliance for use by a user for gathering data from said local or remote data sources, at least one local or remote data source electronically coupled to said information appliance, and

a computer program as claimed in claim 8 stored in at least one information appliance for:

controlling transfer of data between said

information appliance and said remote or local source so that said information appliance gathers data from said remote or local data sources, and

updating data in said information appliance from said gathered data.

10. A system as claimed in claim 9 wherein the link rule specifications and data are written in XML structured textual language.

11. A system as claimed in claim 9 wherein said link rule specifications and data are computer program is implemented in a binary representation of XML.

12. An information appliance for using in a data gathering system having at least one local data source or at least one remote data source, said information appliance comprising:

communication means for permitting said information appliance to communicate with said local or remote sources;

computer program means for gathering data from said local or remote sources to said information appliance and for updating data in said information appliance with said gathered data.

13. An information appliance as claimed in claim 12 having means for permitting the appliance to run the

computer program as claimed in claim 8.

14. An information appliance as claimed in claim 12 wherein said appliance includes a display for displaying data updates to a user and user control means for permitting the user to select or reject displayed updated data.

15. A method of automatically gathering data from a local or remote source by an information appliance and for using said gathered data to update the data in said information appliance, said method comprising the steps of:

coupling said information appliance electronically to said local or remote data source;

gathering data from said local or remote source by electronically transferring said data to said information appliance, and

updating said information appliance with said gathered data.

16. A method as claimed in claim 15 including the steps of displaying said updated gathered data to a user and selecting the displayed data for inclusion or rejection.

17. A method as claimed in claim 15 wherein the user selects acceptance or rejection of the data by a single action.

18.   A method as claimed in claim 15 wherein the user

selects acceptance or rejection of data by clicking a

button or by making a sound.

19.   A method as claimed in claim 16 including the step

of detecting when there is a difference between a data

standard in said information appliance and the data

standard of said local or remote data source and

transforming data from said local or remote data source

to the data standard of said information appliance.